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FM AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0063
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0001
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RHMFIUU/HQ USAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE
RHMFIUU/CDRUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE
REUHL/USDAO BERLIN GE
RUCNFRG/FRG COLLECTIVE
RUEHLZ/AMCONSUL LEIPZIG 0067

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LEIPZIG 000013

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: FLIGHTS TRANSPORTING U.S. TROOPS RECEIVE EXEMPTION FROM
NIGHT-TIME RESTRICTIONS AT LEIPZIG/HALLE AIRPORT

REF: 06 LEIPZIG 0025

LEIPZIG 00000013 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (U) Summary. On June 29, 2007, a Saxony state agency for regional infrastructure issued an amendment to the operating regulations for Leipzig/Halle airport, one effect of which will be that commercial charter flights transporting U.S. military personnel between CONUS and Middle East/Central Asia may depend on round-the-clock availability for refueling and other operations as needed. Of broader economic interest, the amendment confirms that cargo flights touching down to load or unload will be permitted without restriction, as will flights for either cargo or passengers requested by police or military authorities. 24/7 operations are henceforth secure for charter companies transporting U.S. troops (currently World, North American, and Omni Airways) as well as for the Antonov AN-124 transports stationed by the Russia-owned "Ruslan Salis GmbH" at Leipzig/Halle for strategic airlift missions under the NATO SALIS (Strategic Airlift Interim Solution) program. The decision is also good news for the airport, which on July 5 ceremonially opened a second runway to accommodate booming business from DHL and other freight carriers. End Summary.

¶2. (U) During a press conference on June 29, 2007, Walter Christian Steinbach, the President of the Regierungspraesidium Leipzig (or "Leipzig Regional Board" - the Saxony state agency that oversees infrastructure and municipal budgets in the NE region of Saxony) announced he had issued an amendment to the agency's 2004 regulation for airport operations. The agency would impose no restrictions on hours of operation for cargo flights involving unloading or loading at Leipzig/Halle airport. In addition, the amendment removes restrictions on cargo and passenger flights requested by the police or the military. (Note: All commercial and non-military charter flights and transiting cargo flights are still prohibited from operations during the night hours).

¶3. (U) A November 2006 decision by Germany's Federal Administrative Court had required amendment of the regulation in order to limit night operations, as several property owners in the area had demanded in lawsuits. Officials at Leipzig/Halle airport (in private) and political leaders up to Saxony Minister-President Milbradt (in public) express confidence the amended regulation will withstand any further challenge.

¶4. (U) Mark Stelse, customer relations manager of the airport, confirmed to us again July 5 that the exemption from

prohibitions on night operations would apply to the transit flights of World Airways, North American, and Omni Airlines, which use Leipzig/Halle airport as a refueling point for their aircraft transporting U.S. troops to and from the Middle East and Central Asia. This exemption clause covers also the six Antonov AN-124 transport planes owned by the Russian firm "Ruslan Salis," which are stationed (generally two at any given time) at the airport for strategic airlift missions under the NATO SALIS (Strategic Airlift Interim Solution) program, in which 15 NATO states plus Finland participate.

15. (SBU) Airport management and the state and city governments that own the airport favored the fewest possible restrictions on operating times. In this policy they were motivated by a desire to maintain operational flexibility for the airport's competitiveness and its role as a job creation motor. Airport management also advocated 24/7 operations for the American charter companies (under contract to DoD Air Mobility Command) as a matter of business development. Political challenges to the "militarization" of the airport or "indirect support to U.S. military action in Iraq" came over the past six months from Left Party delegates in the Saxony-Anhalt state parliament and Leipzig City Council, but evaporated. We understand that in spring 2007 the Regional Board directed a request to the Saxony state government that it inquire of the German Foreign Office as to whether the flights were consistent with German national policy. In the end, however, the regional authority made no reference to German Federal Government views while announcing the new operating guidelines.

16. (U) Comment: While complaints against noise from the airport are likely to continue, the Federal Administrative Court decision, as carried out by the Regierungspraesidium, settles any legal questions. The charter companies have at Leipzig/Halle the operational flexibility they need for flights related to the U.S. military. The airport's economic role for the region was illustrated in the July 5, 2007 opening of a second runway to accommodate an increasing number of flights operated by express delivery company DHL, a subsidiary of German

LEIPZIG 00000013 002.2 OF 002

Post. (Note: If DHL meets the full operations tempo it plans by June 2008 for Leipzig as its European hub, the company will nightly land, unload, reload, and dispatch up to 52 aircraft here. Lufthansa Cargo also recently announced plans to increase Leipzig operations. End note.) Federal Minister of Transportation Wolfgang Tiefensee and the Ministers-President of Saxony-Anhalt and of Saxony each emphasized in their remarks during the runway opening ceremony the economic importance of the airport as a creator of jobs.

SCHELAND